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## A BOTANICAL EXCURSION TO MOUNT KATAHDIN.

JOSEPH R. CHURCHILL.

(Plates 25-31.)

DURING the first half of July, 1900, five members<sup>1</sup> of the New England Botanical Club visited Mount Katahdin, Maine. The mountain was a new collecting ground for all of the party, and some account of our exploration and collections will perhaps be interesting to the readers of RHODORA.

Twenty years ago Charles E. Hamlin communicated to the Appalachian Mountain Club a paper<sup>2</sup> describing Mount Katahdin, its infrequent but notable visitors, and the four possible routes by which they and others reached the mountain. The route taken by us, which was in great part the fourth one described by him, has since been much shortened by the extension of the railroad from Brownville through Stacyville, and doubtless other routes have been rendered more available since he wrote. Nevertheless Mount Katahdin is still surrounded by an immense wilderness, traversed only by lakes and rivers and by roads or trails, which in summer at least, are too rough to attract the tourist; and Mr. Hamlin's observations are true to-day as then, that the mountain "is so inaccessible that practically it is remote even to New Englanders. It is probably true that a greater

<sup>1</sup> Dr. George G. Kennedy, of Milton, Mass.; Merritt L. Fernald, of the Gray Herbarium, Cambridge, Mass.; J. Franklin Collins, of the Botanical Department of Brown University, Providence, R. I.; and Emile F. Williams and Joseph R. Churchill, of Boston, Mass.

<sup>2</sup> Appalachia, ii. 306.

number of eastern men now annually visit Pike's peak than penetrate to the Maine mountain, and a hundred Bostonians have been among the Alps for one who has climbed Ktaadn."

But though few, it was yet a distinguished company that we followed! To do more than refer to some who preceded us would unduly lengthen our report and repeat unnecessarily what they have themselves written, as well as Mr. Hamlin's account of them already referred to.

In the beginning was Charles Turner, Jr. of Boston, "the original describer of Ktaadn," who with guides and seven comrades made the ascent as early as 1804. His account is preserved in the collections of the Mass. Hist. Society. In 1836 came the excursion of Prof. J. W. Bailey, the father of our genial associate and botanist W. W. Bailey, of Providence. Two other distinguished geologists, Dr. Charles T. Jackson in 1837, and C. H. Hitchcock in 1861, made official visits. The enthusiastic eulogy of the mountain by Theodore Winthrop, scholar and soldier, was published after his death in 1861 under the title "Life in the Open Air." Dr. Edward Everett Hale with his friend Mr. Channing, made a partial ascent in 1845, an account of which was printed in the Boston Daily Advertiser. Then came Thoreau, in 1846, and the Rev. Joseph Blake, who, in 1856 discovered near the summit *Saxifraga stellaris*, var. *comosa*. And Dr. Goodale's visit, in 1861, was rewarded by the discovery of another Katahdin plant, *Carex rariflora*, which, however, in some way escaped detection by our party.

The morning of July 3, 1900, saw two of our delegation safely landed at Stacyville, a little country village on the Bangor and Aroostook R. R. We had had several introductory views of Katahdin from the car windows, but it was at the end of the little straggling road that leads from the station to the Post Office, where we stopped a few moments at the brow of the hill, that we first saw the mountain in his grandeur. Here truly was a picture for an artist. At our feet the hill sloped steeply to the West. On the horizon, twenty miles distant, was the great pile stretching along from North to South, crowned with its two peaks or summits and easily distinguished almost to the base from the lower ranges of hills that lay between. Below us stretching away to the mountain and the western horizon was the wilderness, almost unbroken save by the camps and trails of the hunters and logging men. This was the broad flat valley of the

East Branch of the Penobscot, which, eight miles away, flows peacefully southward past "Lunksoos," the camp on its hither shore which we should reach by night, and where we should await the arrival of the rest of our party. In all our trip I recall no other view of or from the mountain equal in beauty to this one from the edge of Stacyville. Here they pointed out to us the great abyss in the Eastern slopes of the mountain, into which above debouched the "North Basin" and the "South Basin," the latter our destination and ten-days' camping site. From the south end of the range there extended toward us the long gaunt and rocky spur tipped by Pomola, the whole spur curving about and embracing the South Basin much as Cape Cod surrounds Massachusetts Bay. Here we saw the southeastern exposure. At our camp we were upon the other, or inner, side. Of course we were much interested in making out these points, and in observing the great patches of snow that still lay there upon the steep slopes.

Our guide, Capt. Rogers, met us at the station with a two-seated buck-board, to take us with our baggage to Lunksoos. No summer boarding-house affair was this buck-board. It was built for substantial service over roads the roughness of which we were now to experience, but which accurately to describe requires that this sketch shall be illustrated with one of the views of a sample passage en route (pl. 26) taken by the artist to the expedition.

Outside the town, at the foot of the long hill I have mentioned, beside a stream where recently had been the inevitable saw-mill, we had our noontide lunch amid *Mitella nuda*, *Ranunculus septentrionalis*, a profusion of *Linnaea*, and other plants common enough here, but very welcome to the unaccustomed eyes of Bostonians. Here also we made our first collection from the Maine soil, a tall *Geranium* which proved to be the *G. pratense*, L., of Northern Europe. We had noticed it by the roadsides as we rode through Stacyville, where it is evidently well established. It is like our *G. maculatum*, but much larger and coarser; the flowers are deep blue-purple and the leaves are cut into very narrow pointed lobes like those of *Ranunculus acris*. The upper parts of the plant are glandular-hairy. Mr. Fernald has also observed it elsewhere in the State, and it is doubtless entitled to recognition in future editions of the Manual.

Just beyond this stream, where the fields come to the forest, a turnpike gate is appropriately set across the road; and as we closed it be-

hind us we shut out our nearest post office, our railroad station, and civilization, for two whole weeks. We have now, since our return, no difficulty in identifying this point also as that described by Hamlin in his paper (p. 322) where "the way turning directly west . . . the Third of the Sixth (now the plantation of Stacyville) changes from a smooth highway to the worst of cart-tracks." My note for the afternoon says: "We had a rough ride on the buck-board, but it was mostly walking." We walked both for comfort and to botanize.

There is, after all, little collecting to be done (unless one is looking for mushrooms) in the sombre shades of a Maine forest, so we easily kept ahead of the horses, and it was long before sunset that we emerged in a clearing upon the river bank at the "Hunt Place." As it was now raining we sought shelter in the dilapidated old house and waited for the wagon to come up. This same "Hunt Place" was visited by Thoreau, who, on August 1, 1857, came down the river in his canoe, and called at the house. He says "We found that we had camped about a mile above Hunt's, which is on the East bank and is the last house for those who ascend Katahdin on this side . . . . We stopped to get some sugar, but found that the family had moved away, and the house was unoccupied, except temporarily by some men who were getting the hay. They told me that the road to Katahdin left the river eight miles above; also that perhaps we could get some sugar at Fisk's, fourteen miles below. I do not remember that we saw the mountain at all from the river."

We too found the Hunt Place as deserted and desolate as did Thoreau more than forty years before, but "the last house for those who ascend Katahdin on this side" was now a mile and a half further up the River, at Lunksoos.

The cart-way along the edge of the river was rougher than the "tote road" just passed, but we were now bundled up in rubber coats and so packed into the buckboard in the rain, that we had to submit to the pounding, which we had before avoided by walking. Capt. Rogers told us that his camp was named from a mountain still further up the river. Thoreau spells the name of this mountain "*Lunxus*," and says the word means "Indian Devil." Whether appropriate or not to the neighboring mountain, the appellation thus translated is wholly out of keeping with the quiet rural beauty of this little riverside home; unless indeed it is intended to suggest the character of the roads by which the paradise is finally reached.



AT THE CAIRN, WEST PEAK,  $\frac{7}{2}$  MT. KATAHDIN.

“We had a rough ride on the buck-board, but it was mostly walking.”

The camp comprised a two-story frame house with a barn, and at a little distance a sylvan dormitory or hunters' lodge of two stories, built of logs placed perpendicularly and containing eight or ten rooms. The woods were cleared away and a green but "stumpy" lawn sloped gently from the house to the river bank a few rods below. The thick forest bordering the opposite bank of the river was reflected in the smooth dark water, though above and below were rapids, and the picture was not there so restful. A wire cable with its primitive ferry-boat, connecting the banks, added a picturesque feature to the landscape. While Katahdin, as Thoreau said, was not visible from the river, yet from the little observatory upon the roof there was a good view, though much obstructed by clouds about its head, and (it must be confessed) by other clouds about ours; for there we found that the black flies were particularly numerous and aggressive. So we did not much frequent the roof-top, but made ourselves busy comfortable and at home in many ways below.

The next day, July 4th, we transferred almost all the contents of our neatly packed trunks to large rubber or canvas bags and in other ways mobilized our forces. We watched the swallows building their nests along the eaves of the low piazza, quite within reach. In a canoe ride up the pretty river at sunset we made our first acquaintance with a moose who was feeding in a wet meadow. He soon made off into the woods, however, looking upon us undoubtedly, in common with all mankind, as his foe. He could not know that we were not collecting moose! We walked back down the river road to Hunt's again, and along the bank collected *Carex torta*, *C. arcta* and *C. tribuloides*, vars. *turbata* and *reducta*. In the woods we found *Habenaria Hookeriana*, *Viola Selkirkii*, *Pyrola chlorantha*, and *P. asarifolia*.

Tuesday evening, July 5, brought Collins, Fernald and Williams. Our party was now complete; and, after they had gone through the same demoralizing process of dumping blankets and clothes from the open and luxurious trunks to the dark cavernous recesses of canvas bags, we were ready for the start the next morning.

The Wassataquoik River drains the Northeast slope of Katahdin and empties into the East Branch above Hunt's. It is at this season a shallow, brawling mountain stream, and before the despoiling hand of the lumberman, followed by the usual visitation of forest fires, it and the valley through which it flows, must have been a scene of

surpassing beauty and wildness. Now, while much of its former beauty remains, yet, in its ascent, we travelled the greater part of the way through an open rough and rocky country, from which the protecting forest had been almost entirely removed by the axe and by fire. Thus "progresses" everywhere the Maine wilderness. Some big primeval woods through which we climbed, well up Katahdin's side, hitherto saved by their remoteness and inaccessibility, were, it was said, already doomed, and the trunks of these black spruces were this winter to follow their mates down the yearly diminishing current of the Wassataquoik to the saw mills. Some benefit however, from all this havoc had we in the logging camps, which derive their existence from this industry and which, at intervals each of several miles along our path, afforded us rude shelter and hospitality on our two days' journey to our own "Camp Kennedy."

Two buckboards took us by the little wire ferry across the East Branch. At the outset we had a particularly exciting and boisterous passage through the low wet bottom lands which lay along the west bank. It was wet and miry, and as the mire was invariably much deeper on one side than the other, the center of gravity of our wagons was often dangerously near getting outside the base, and the woods rang with our shouts of alternate laughter and terror dependent upon which side at the moment was up and which down, ours or the other fellow's.

Walking was here out of the question; there was too much water; so we stuck to our seats, observing the driver's direction, "Just get your heft under you, then set on it"; but we rejoiced when after a mile we reached the dry land. Passing over the ridge between the two rivers we struck the Wassataquoik at Dacey Dam. Thence our path lay along the left bank of the river, very gradually ascending. At noon we lunched at "Robar's," and before sunset, after some steeper grades and climbs, we reached the "Bell Camp" at the head of navigation for wheels.

The log house was prettily situated above the steep river-bank. We had come that day about sixteen miles, and had acquired good appetites. There were trout in the river, and some of the party, instead of botanizing, undertook to provide for supper, with very good success. A notable collection was made en route in *Listera auriculata*, which grew in low ground by the river.

Before stretching ourselves, some in bunks and some on the

equally comfortable log floor, we went through a most salutary and disciplinary exercise in recovering from the depths of those bags just the few things that we needed for the night, while the others slid to the bottom. The sense of touch was the only one involved in the transaction, but at these times a feeling akin to despair took possession of us, wondering how many of our worldly possessions there would remain to us the next night and the next.

Here, early the next morning, Saturday, July 7, we crossed and left the Wassataquoik, and ascended a narrow valley through which flows a tributary brook. After an astonishing ford of the rocky rushing river by the horses and buck-boards, our camp equipage was transferred to a "jumper," or rough lumber sled, which, drawn by two horses, followed us to the "McLeod" Camp, two miles beyond. Here one of the mountain thunder storms, which were afterwards of almost daily occurrence, overtook us, and we were glad to get under cover of the rude cabin.

Striped squirrels, "chipmunks," ran about in the cabin and upon me as I sat in the open doorway. We were grieved to hear afterwards that they had all been slaughtered. Poor tame little creatures! They get in the way of man, the bigger animal; they eat some of his pork and beans; straightway they are classed as pests, and become a target for the revolvers of cruel hunters and guides, who indeed seldom wait even for this excuse for gratifying the passion for slaughter. We saw many deer throughout the trip and wondered how men could get pleasure in slaying the beautiful and harmless creatures.

At McLeod's began the real ascent. Even the horses and the jumper stopped here. To our camp in the South Basin, there was only a "trail" through the forest, with the blazed trees by which to follow it, with care. Our lithe and sturdy guides made the climb more easily I think than we, though they carried most of the baggage, sometimes eighty pounds apiece, on their backs. The length of this stage was fully five miles, though I have an impression that these same guides diplomatically assured us that it was but three. When we reached Depot Pond after many hours of climbing, we fondly imagined that we were near the top, but when we came down over the same trail, we found this pond a long way from camp!

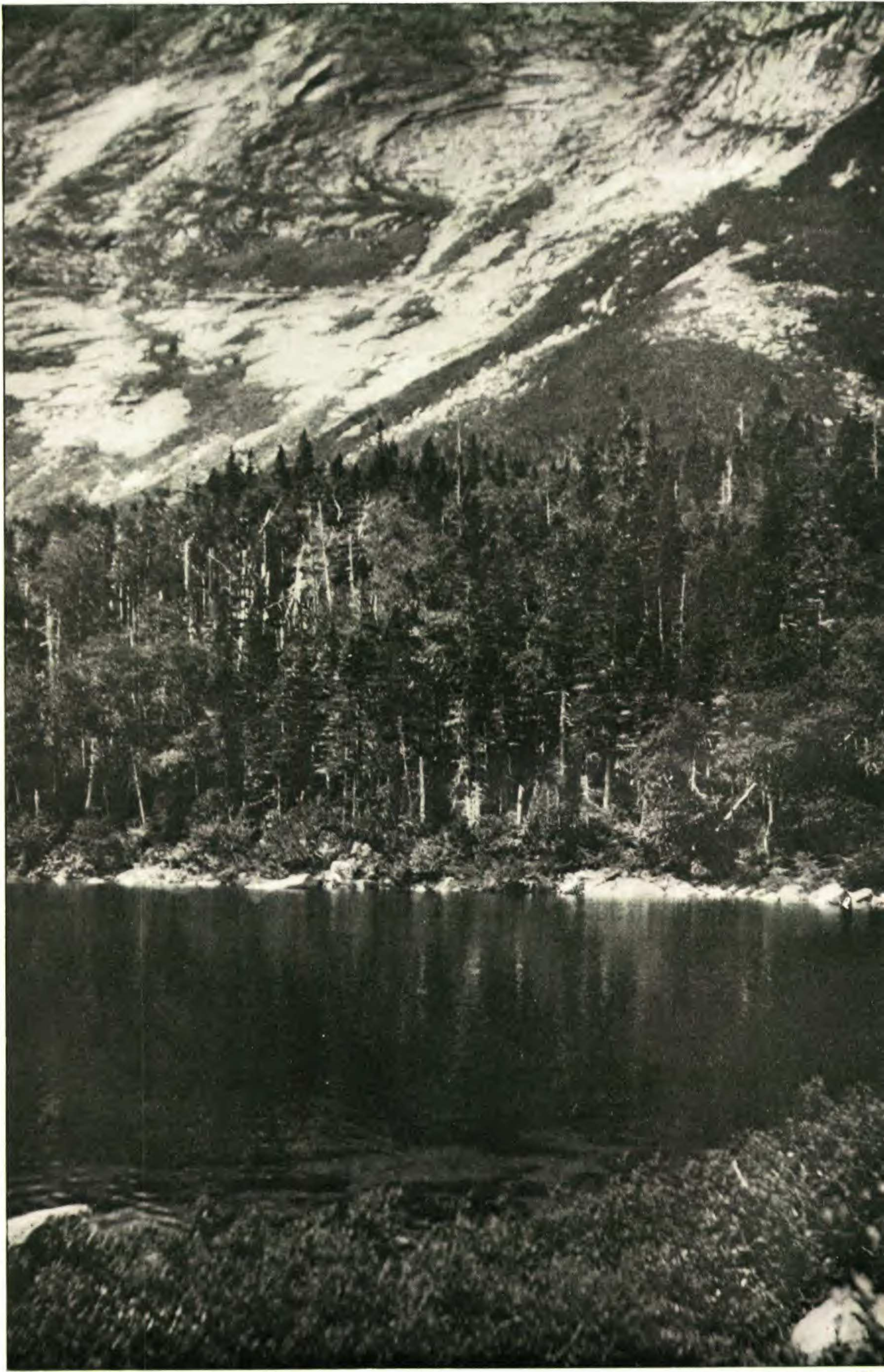
It was now again raining; we were wet, and the air and the mossy earth and forest and everything about us was drenched; yet when at



last we stumbled upon our long-sought Camp Kennedy, it was not without a feeling of surprise, to find it there, imbedded in the apparently unending forest. We were looking first for "scrub" perhaps; or a limit of trees; something in the nature of a clearing. Yet, newly constructed from the unpeeled spruce logs that grew on the spot, with low flat black roof, it seemed part of the forest itself and quite a normal growth there. A most artistic chimney upon one side of the structure, though made of green spruce bark in keeping with the rest, betrayed more clearly its artificial character; and the smoke arising therefrom gave promise of a fire, of comfort, and of dry clothes within; an invitation we were not slow in accepting. The inside was much like the outside. It was a single room about twenty feet square, with flat roof about nine feet from the floor on one side, sloping to perhaps seven on the other. The floor was made also of smaller logs, laid unhewn upon or just above the ground, like a corduroy road and about as level. There was a door about two feet wide in front, facing South, and opposite to a window with a glazed fixed sash about three feet square.

On one side the logs were interrupted for a space in the middle, to take in the fireplace which was built outside and of stones, but the chimney itself was built down close to the fire of thick spruce bark; and, though exciting our instant admiration as a work of art, became from day to day more inflammable and dangerous, and was, despite the humidity of the climate, several times on fire. Such construction would never have been approved by our Boston Inspector of buildings. Opposite the fireplace, in the corners, were two bunks raised perhaps four feet from the floor and built of small trunks or poles; and beneath them, on the ground, two more bunks. The bedding was spruce twigs, imbricated. For furniture we had a table made of spruce bark, with sections of the logs for seats. I dare say that I have described too particularly a typical log cabin of the Maine woods, but it may be new to some of the readers of RHODORA, as it was to some of us.

Except the glass sash, the roof was the only part of our house which was imported, and we had much trouble with it, though perhaps not for that reason. It was made of rolls of tarred paper slightly overlapped; and the pitch, but two feet in twenty, was so slight that frequently the rain trickled through into our sleeping nests and upon our dryers, instead of going off by the eaves as it shoul



TIMBER-LINE ABOVE CHIMNEY POND, MT. KATAHDIN.

It was but a frail barrier between us and the clouds, when some of the deluges came at night, and then we were glad we were under the trees and not on the exposed lakeshore near by, where the wind roared and would surely have torn our paper roof to tatters.

We were now well up in the South Basin on the east slope of Mount Katahdin, at an altitude of about 3000 feet. This Basin may be roughly described as bounded west and south by the steep wall and uppermost slopes of the mountain itself, north by a spur extending eastward from the mountain between the so-called North and South Basins, and southeast by Pomola, connected with the rest of the mountain by a most remarkable arm or promontory, a narrow precipitous and desolate mountain wall. The monument or southern peaks, which are the highest, and therefore the summit of Katahdin, are precisely where this narrow wall separates from the broad upland.

At the foot of the concave and ragged slopes of Pomola and this narrow connecting ridge, in front of the Camp and but a few rods away, was a little alpine lake, bordered in part by a narrow bog and in part by giant boulders, sometime parcel of the heights above. About this tarn, Chimney Pond, were collected many of the good things for which we came, notably *Carex saxatilis*, concerning which Mr. Fernald has elsewhere<sup>1</sup> given a particular account of his investigations and conclusions. In its icy waters, just below its outlet, grew *Salix balsamifera* and *S. phylicifolia*.

Along the brook, which flowed by the Camp, we found flowering *Viburnum pauciflorum*, and *Pyrola minor* which we coaxed into flower before we departed.

Sunday, July 8, the day following our arrival, was a day of idleness enforced by the continual downpour of rain though it is recorded that neither weather nor want of appetite interfered with our keen appreciation of dinner, which included a first rate stew of beef, potatoes and onions served in porringers. Dessert, flour biscuits with maple syrup, in tin plates. It was probably before this meal that we improved our view of the great cliffs and of the summit by cutting down some fir-balsam trees which grew beside the camp.

The next morning, July 9, gave promise of no better weather, but something was to be done, rain or shine, and Fernald, Collins and

<sup>1</sup> RHODORA, iii. 44.

the writer started up the rocky bed of the brook to explore. After a mile or more we were out of the woods, the brook and its bed disappeared, and we found ourselves ascending the steep slope of the mountain (which on this side forms a wall of the Basin), and absorbed by the alpine plants which grew profusely about. I think the rain still continued at intervals, but it made no difference. They were April showers which only made the flowers brighter and more beautiful.

The Heaths were conspicuous and almost all in flower. *Cassiope* was there with delicate mossy stems and white flowers. The rosy nodding flowers of *Bryanthus* were profuse and attractive. *Loisel-~~euria~~* was perhaps as abundant, but less conspicuous. There were on the ledges the curious convex tufts of the *Diapensia*, with even surface, but with large white flowers projecting, like pins and ornaments from a pincushion. Of the Vacciniums we collected *V. Vitis-idaea*, *V. uliginosum* and *V. caespitosum*. We found *Viola palustris* here and at other points, always with flowers white.

Near the top of the ascent or slope we stopped to drink from a cold spring. Here we collected *Lycopodium sitchense*, and *Salix herbacea* with the little staminate catkins just in flower. *Alnus viridis*, too, was just expanding its staminate catkins. But as usual the Alpine *Rhododendron* had gone by thus early.

These slopes, up one of which we thus climbed, come to a distinct termination and are succeeded, at a step, by a nearly level upland grassy or sedgy plateau between the North and the West Peak or summit. The edge of this plateau and the adjoining upper slopes were fairly carpeted with *Arctostaphylos alpina*, which was very full of green fruit. It was not late when we reached this "Saddle," and we could easily have gone to the summit, but we preferred to take another day for that. So we ate our lunch, wandered about over the great plain, enjoying the view and the strong fresh wind which came out of the West, and made our way down a neighboring slope, which had been recently converted into a "Slide," and thence by way of the brook, seasonably and triumphantly to Camp.

The next morning, Tuesday, July 10, some of the party thought that they discovered assuring signs of fair weather and started for the summit, but toward noon it rained as hard as ever, and the afternoon was spent in camp. With our load of plants already collected there was plenty there to keep us busy.



Negative loaned by Prof. L. H. Merrill.

SOUTHERN EDGE OF THE TABLELAND, MT. KATAHDIN.

THE SADDLE FROM NEAR THE CHIMNEY, MT. KATAHDIN.

Wednesday, July 11, we were more fortunate. We got away early, followed the brook as before, but left it and ascended to the Saddle by way of the Slide, which was on the whole easier than working and climbing through the rocks and scrub on the adjoining ledges and slopes. From this point, the top of the west wall of the Basin, the ascent is wonderfully easy. The great Tableland stretches away to North and South, very irregularly bounded by the various ravines and precipitous slopes, and often covered with loose rocks and boulders, but rising very gradually to the two peaks.

We were soon widely scattered over this lawn, looking at the grand view and trying to name the various lakes and mountains which made up the panorama, and collecting a few grasses and other plants; but we finally got together at the stone cairn at the top about midday. We were here more than 2000 feet higher than our camp, whose location we could readily discern; and according to the most accurate survey, 5215 feet above sea level. It was then clear, though clouds were beginning to drive in from the West, and the view in all directions was very beautiful. The numerous large lakes, and the rivers, too, whose courses were easily traced, gave a variety to the landscape which is wholly wanting in the view from the summit of Washington.

Here at the cairn, marking this summit, ends the great mountain plain, up which we had comfortably walked, and the end is very abrupt. Looking East, we are close to the ragged edge of the fearful precipices which fall hundreds of feet to the little lake at our camp below. Turning but a quarter-circle to the South, the drop was almost as abrupt; save that between the two descents is the dizzy path which leads down and along the narrow ridge over the Chimney to Pomola, here making off from the mountain, first to the East and then at a sharp angle to the North; embracing, as I have said, the South Basin in its great curve. It was a scene of desolation! Were it not that the granitic formation forbade that conclusion, we might think ourselves on the ragged edge of the crater of an extinct volcano. The rocks were broken and disintegrated.<sup>1</sup> The cliff

<sup>1</sup>Prof. R. S. Tarr, in his paper on "Glaciation of Mount Katahdin, Maine" (Bull. Geol. Soc. Am. xi. 441), compares these steep walls, only recently exposed to the fierce action of frost, water and wind, with similar steep valleys in Greenland, in which glaciers now exist, and from this and other significant evidence he concludes that these Katahdin Basins were until recently the beds of local glaciers.